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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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SUBJECT: OPPOSITION CANDIDATES ALLEGE IRREGULARITIES IN BY ELECTION
CONDUCTED BY INEC

1 (U) Summary: Several opposition parties in Oyo State alleged irregularity and fraud in a by election held in the capital city of Ibadan to fill a legislative seat rendered vacant by the murder of its former incumbent.

12. (U) On January 26, the Independent National Electoral Commission conducted a by-election in Lagelu/Akinyele federal constituency, Oyo State, to fill a vacancy that resulted from the assassination of a federal legislator, Olusegun Oladimeji. (NOTE: Oladimeji was murdered by yet to be identified gunmen on September 14, 2007. Several politicians in Oyo State alleged that Oladimeji's murder was politically motivated. The police have since commenced investigation. End Note). Mr. Oyetunji Omotayo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won the January 26 election with 17,507 votes to defeat his closest rival, Bashiru Latinwo of the Action Congress (AC), who scored 4,906 votes.

13. (U) Several opposition parties who fielded candidates during the election alleged that the ruling PDP connived with INEC to manipulate the election in its favor. The All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) called for the cancellation of the election. The party alleged that it was marred by 'massive rigging, violence, intimidation and carting away of ballot boxes'. ANPP also claimed that several PDP thugs led by prominent PDP chieftain Lamidi Adedibu and Deputy Governor Taofeek Arapaja stole ballot boxes and inflicted injuries on opposition members. The AC alleged that policemen connived with INEC officials to manipulate the election. Deputy Police Commissioner Ralph Ibeazor told journalists that violence did occur during the election. He said the police arrested 65 people who drove around the city in a convoy, wielding charms and dangerous weapons to scare away voters. Ayodele Folami, Public Affairs Officer of the Oyo State Office of INEC, told PolSpec that no formal complaint has been submitted to INEC by any of the opposition candidates.

14. (U) Comment: Police confirmation of violence and irregularities during the by-election has further shown that lessons still need to be learned from the April 2007 general election. Local and foreign election observers reported the 2007 general election was marred by violence and voting irregularities. This by-election also proves that fundamental electoral reforms are needed quickly and the Federal Government's electoral review committee needs to move faster to recommend reforms in order to avoid future election problems at the local and national levels. End Comment.

15. This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja